



NIRUPAMA BORGOHAIN

A People's Writer

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“This novel *Abhijatri* has been dedicated to those women of Assam who have been making sacrifices for the cause of women's emancipation since the very beginning till now”.

So writes Nirupama Borgohain in the dedication page in her widely acclaimed novel *Abhijatri*, a biographical novel on the life of Chandraprava Saikiani, a firebrand revolutionary and social activist in the early twentieth century Assam. Like Chandraprava Saikiani, Nirupama Borgohain herself is a writer activist, a tireless crusader for social justice with an uncompromising temperament, who has always been fighting against social prejudice, political injustice and particularly against gender disparities. Born in 1932 to a middle class family in Guwahati, Nirupama Borgohain grew up in a cultural environment along with her five siblings. Her parents Jadab Tamuly and Kashiswari Tamuly inculcated in her the values of life which ultimately gave her the much needed mental support to face all trials and tribulations of life with dignity and firmness. Nirupama Borgohain appeared in the Matric

examination from T C High School, conducted for the first time by Gauhati University and thereafter she completed her I. Sc examination from Cotton College. After graduation with Honours in Education, she did her higher studies in Calcutta University with Post graduation in English. The cultural environment of Calcutta immensely contributed to the enrichment of the intellectual make-up of her mind as she got there the opportunity to come in touch with the treasures of Bengali and English literature. Nirupama Borgohain was an avid reader of Bengali, Assamese and English literature which undoubtedly had decisive influences on her literary sensibility. Her engagement with the literary world started with a short story in 1946. But her major literary work saw the light of the day in the form of a novel titled *Ei Nadi Nirabadhi* in which the story evolved around the river Pagladia and the village folk whose lives were inextricably linked up with the river. River Pagladia is a metaphor in her novels like the sea in the novels of Joseph Conrad, with its enigmatic and overriding presence in the lives of the human beings who come in contact with its vast expanse and unfathomable depth. It enriches their material and mental lives and sometimes it also causes irreparable damages to their already deplorable conditions of socio-economic life. Nirupama Borgohain is a prolific writer with thirty three novels, sixteen short story collections, nine essay collections and six translation works to her credit besides regularly publishing serialized novels and articles in newspapers and journals. Some of her notable works are *Anya Jivan*, *Iparar Ghar*, *Xiparar Ghar* *Ipar Xipar* and *Abhijatri*. She has also written another biographical novel on the life of Indira Miri, titled *Aragamini*. For her *Anya Jivan*, Nirupama Borgohain got Shaswati Award in 1987 and Basanti Devi Bordoloi Award from Asom Xahitya Xabha in 1989-90. She also received Hem Baruah Award from Asom Xahitya Xabha for *Abhijatri* in 1994 and for this much acclaimed novel she received Shatya Akademi Award in 1996. Tripura Government also conferred *Adwait Malla Barman* memory award on Nirupama Borgohain in recognition of her service to the oppressed class of the society through the medium of her bold writing. The Prabina Saikia Award and Assam State Dalit Sahitya Akademi award were some other feathers in her cap.

Nirupama Borgohain had to undergo many hardships in her life and like all great individuals she could transcend all forms of negativities with firmness and unquestionable integrity. For as long as twelve years she was the sub-editor of the Assamese weekly *Nilachal*, a profession which she carried out with utmost sincerity and strict adherence to principles. But during the Assam agitation of 1979-85, she had to lose the job for her uncompromising act of disclosing the underlying political realities at any cost. To speak for reason and balance against the populist surge of emotions during the Movement was not an easy thing to do, but Nirupama Borgohain withstood all criticism with unparalleled sense of integrity, courage and strong determination not to bow down before any pressure. After that she joined some others newspapers such as *Janakranti* and *Saptahik Sachipat*. The profession of a journalist gave her the platform to voice her concern over the sociopolitical problems crippling the

society and cry for social justice. Her fictional works *Bhabishyatar Ranga Surjya* and *Gohani Aai Goshani Ai* give an insight into the critical phase in her journalistic career. Another important thing to be noted is that she depended on writing as her only means of livelihood which is not a secure profession for a writer in Assam even now.

Nirupama Borgohain is a feminist in a broader sense of the term because her concern over gender discrimination is rooted in her desire to address all forms of injustice that prevail in the society as a curse to humanity. The thematic concerns and portrayal of characters in her novels reflect the humanitarian values that she has been upholding all through her life. The female protagonists in her novels and short stories are not timid and submissive being living at the margin of the patriarchal society, they know the language of protest and within the given bound they know how to assert their individual identities and live with a sense of dignity and self-esteem. Nirupama Borgohain has also written an autobiography *Biswas and Sangshayar Majedi* and as one goes through her personal narrative one cannot help getting the impression that this non-conformist writer and outspoken critic of injustice has really been able to transcend her *Sangshay* (fear and uncertainties) to construct a strong edifice of *Biswas* (conviction) for her and for the society as well. □□